

William Anastasi

New Works on paper

Stalke Galleri, Vesterbrogade 184

16.04 to 19.05.05

William Anastasi was one of the founders of Conceptual Art and had strong connections to Minimalism in his early work. His exhibitions *Sound Objects* (1964–65) and *Six Sites* (1966–67) helped establish what later became widely known as Site-Specific art. Over the following four and a half decades, this genre developed into a major field of artistic practice. Even before these groundbreaking exhibitions, Anastasi had developed his signature innovation through a process-based approach to drawing, which he referred to as his “unsighted drawings.”

These works began in 1963 and continued to evolve through ongoing strategies. They were typically keyed either to the body—such as the *Pocket Drawings* and other stationary unsighted works—or to the specific space in which they were made, including *Six Sites* and *Continuum*. Among Conceptual artists and Minimalists, Anastasi stood out as one who, since the 1960s, consistently pushed the boundaries of drawing as a medium. His influence was followed by many artists, including the adoption of specific genres he had invented.

The primary focus of the exhibition was Anastasi’s drawings, though selected prints produced during his then-current residency were also shown. The drawings spanned the period from 1984 to the present at the time, with some works created specifically for the exhibition. His practice embraced drawing as performance, incorporating chance, a rigorous focus on the present, and the body’s relationship to the execution of the drawing. These concerns reflected core themes of Conceptualism forged through Anastasi’s innovations.

Although Anastasi was widely regarded as a master draftsman, his oeuvre was not limited to drawing. His sculptures, paintings, photographs, videos, and films—like his drawings—played a significant role in defining both the medium and the broader movement. As writer Thomas McEvelley noted, Anastasi pioneered the use of tautology in art, and art historian Lucy Lippard identified him as one of the earliest artists to erase boundaries and investigate the dematerialization of the art object—key themes shared by both Conceptual Art and Minimalism.

Underlying Anastasi’s practice was his assertion that “the only interesting thing about taste is that it is always changing.” His consistent reference to the body across his various drawing strategies was evident in works of all scales. This approach relied on a rigorously reduced phenomenological method in which each gesture was tailored to its specific scale and mode of execution. A drawing might begin by folding a sheet of paper small enough to fit into a pocket, as in the *Pocket Drawings*, or—such as in the *Subway* or *Bus Drawings*—by placing a small sheet of paper on his lap while in transit. When viewed later, these drawings conveyed a strong sense of the artist’s physical presence at the moment of their making.

Stalke Galleri had worked with William Anastasi for nearly twenty years and was particularly pleased to present the exhibition at a moment when international recognition of his work was growing significantly. His work was represented in the permanent collections of major American museums as well as several important European institutions. He was

also generously represented in the world's most significant private collections of contemporary drawing, alongside numerous leading private collections of painting and sculpture.

At the time of the exhibition, two of Anastasi's 1969 Pocket Drawings were on view at the Museum of Modern Art in New York as part of the exhibition *Drawings from The Modern, Part II, 1945–1975*. These works had been acquired by the museum in 2004, along with two larger conceptual pencil-and-ink drawings from 1989. The Pocket Drawings were also reproduced in MoMA's collection publication *Drawings from The Modern, 1945–1975*, which had just been released.

William Anastasi: *Works on Paper* at Stalke Galleri marked the first in a series of three sequential solo exhibitions in Europe. Following the Copenhagen exhibition, Thomas Rehbein Galerie in Cologne presented early works from the 1960s and 1970s (April 30 – June 21), while Art Agents in Hamburg showed *Blind*, 1966/2005 (June 4 – July 31), an exhibition in which every surface of the gallery interior was camouflaged at Anastasi's direction by a small team of painters.

On the opening evening, the artist gave a brief talk at 7 PM.



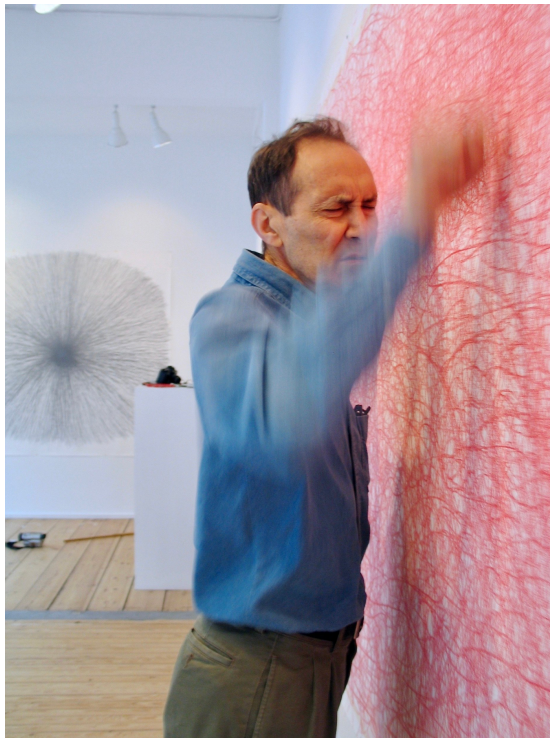
Review summary (after Eva Pohl, *Berlingske Tidende*, 2005)

In her review, Eva Pohl situates William Anastasi as a central figure in American conceptual art, emphasizing his long-standing commitment to chance, bodily movement, and process. At Stalke Galleri, Anastasi presented *Blind Drawings* and new prints that foreground the physical act of drawing as an energetic and time-based event rather than a controlled visual composition.

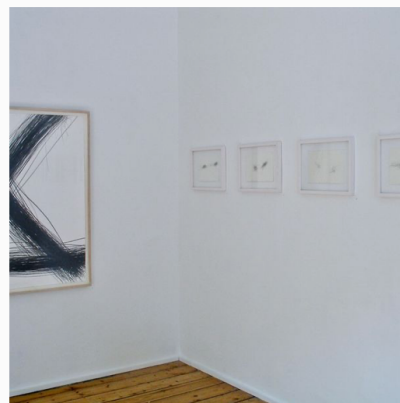
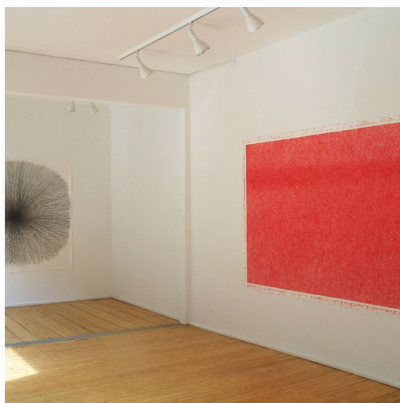
Pohl highlights how Anastasi's works are generated through movement: the artist draws while walking, holding paper in his pocket, allowing the pencil to register bodily rhythm, coincidence, and spatial displacement. The resulting drawings record energy rather than intention, revealing traces of motion, repetition, and interruption. In this way, the works resist traditional ideas of authorship and mastery, aligning instead with a conceptual approach in which randomness and process are essential components.

The review connects Anastasi's practice to a broader art-historical lineage, referencing figures such as Marcel Duchamp and Robert Smithson, while also stressing Anastasi's distinctive position. His works are not illustrations of ideas but direct manifestations of lived action. Pohl notes that this emphasis on chance and corporeality gives the works a quiet intensity, where minimal means produce complex visual and conceptual results.

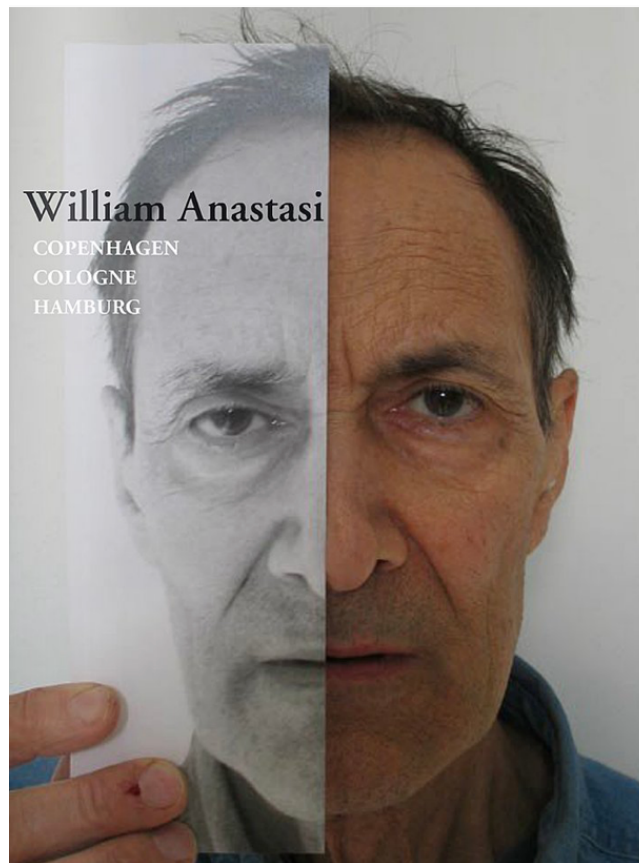
Overall, the exhibition is described as a clear and focused presentation of Anastasi's artistic principles: drawing as an extension of the body, art as an event unfolding in time, and meaning emerging through process rather than predetermined form.



William Anastasi, in process, Stalke Galleri, 2005



Exhibition views of William Anastasi's works at Stalke Galleri, 2005, including Blind Drawings, large-scale blind Drawing, and graphic works.



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View from the opening